

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A valved plug to be fitted on a mouth piece at an inlet opening of an instrument entrance passage leading to a biopsy channel of an endoscopic insertion tube, said plug being formed of a resilient material in its entirety and having, at opposite ends of a foldable connecting strip, a generally tubular main body portion internally formed with a constricted passage of a smaller diameter as compared with said inlet opening of said instrument entrance passage at an intermediate portion between outer and inner ends thereof, and a nesting piece adapted to be detachably and tightly coupled with said main body portion and having a normally closed slit valve in axial alignment with said constricted passage in said main body portion to permit insertion of an instrument therethrough, characterized in that:

said main body portion is provided with an interlocking inward projection of a predetermined thickness at an outer end to be coupled with said nesting piece; and

said nesting piece is provided with an annular interlocking groove around outer periphery of a tubular body, said interlocking groove being narrower than said predetermined thickness of said interlocking projection on the part of said main body and adapted to ~~engage~~ with grip said interlocking projection tightly in a compressed state from upper, lower and inner sides ~~to hold same in a compressed state; and~~

said slit valve being located in an axially spaced position from said constricted passage and opened toward said constricted passage upon insertion of an instrument.

2. (Previously Presented) A valved plug as defined in claim 1, wherein said

interlocking projection is an annular ledge projecting radially inward from the outer end of said main body portion on the outer side of said constricted passage.

3. (Original) A valved plug as defined in claim 2, wherein said annular ledge is so dimensioned as to have an inside diameter smaller than diameter of said annular interlocking groove of said nesting piece.

4. (Original) A valved plug as defined in claim 2, wherein an annular recess is formed between said interlocking projection and said constricted passage of said main body portion, said annular recess being so dimensioned as to have an inside diameter smaller than outside diameter of said interlocking groove on the side of said nesting piece.

5. (Original) A valved plug as defined in claim 1, wherein said interlocking projection of said main body portion is tightly engaged with said interlocking groove on the side of said nesting piece through tapered or inclined surfaces and retained in an interlocked state more tightly by wedge-like actions of said tapered surfaces when an axial force is exerted thereto from inside of said biopsy channel.

6. (Previously Presented) A valved plug as defined in claim 10, wherein said circular body portion of said nesting piece is formed in a hemispherical cup-like shape, and said slit is formed across a bottom portion of said hemispherical body portion.

7. (Previously Presented) A valved plug as defined in claim 1, wherein said main body is internally provided with a hollow cavity under said constricted passage, and a slit is formed radially within a range of said hollow cavity.

8. (Original) A valved plug as defined in claim 7, wherein said slit is formed in an area inward of said interlocking projection on the side of said main body portion of said plug.

9. (Previously Presented) A valved plug as defined in claim 2, wherein a ridge is formed on one of engaging surfaces of said main body portion and nesting piece, said ridge being adapted to be deformed into a flattened shape by compression as said nesting piece is coupled with said main body portion of said plug.

10. (Previously Presented) A valved plug as defined in claim 1, wherein:
said nesting piece is composed of a circular body portion having a slit cut across a center region thereof, and an annular interlocking flange formed integrally with and on top of said circular body portion around said slit and spread radially outward to hang over circumferential edges of said circular body portion; and

said interlocking projection on said main body portion of said plug being adapted to be brought into engagement tightly with said interlocking groove formed between said flange portion and said circular body portion of said nesting piece and gripped in said interlocking groove in a compressed state when said nesting piece is coupled with said main body portion.

11. (Currently Amended) A valved plug comprising:
a main body portion internally formed with a constricted passage at an intermediate portion between outer and inner ends thereof; and

a nesting piece adapted to be detachably and tightly coupled with said main body portion and having a slit valve in axial alignment with said constricted passage in said main body portion,

wherein said plug is formed of a resilient material,

wherein said main body portion is provided with an interlocking inward projection of a predetermined thickness at an outer end to be coupled with said nesting piece, and

Application Serial No.: 10/689,650
Reply to Office Action dated July 13, 2005

wherein said nesting piece is provided with an interlocking groove around an outer periphery thereof, said interlocking groove being narrower than said predetermined thickness of said interlocking projection and adapted to engage with said interlocking projection tightly from upper, lower and inner sides to hold said interlocking projection in a compressed state, and

wherein said slit valve is located in an axially spaced apart position from said constricted passage.